



SUCCESS STORY

Building Consensus for a Baywide Coastal Resources Management Plan



EcoGov assistance to LGUs includes training their personnel in preparing maps of their municipal waters.



Dinalungan, one of the LGUs along Baler Bay, has school-based programs that encourage students to get involved in protecting their marine resources, like collecting propagules for planting elsewhere.

"We had abundant fish catch up to the 1970s; now the fishes we catch are much smaller and we have to go further off the shore to be able to have substantial catch," laments a local fisher. "Our families are so hard up now. Since we have lower catch, we have lesser food and income," adds another.

Baler Bay located in the Pacific seaboard north of Luzon has rich seagrass areas that are feeding grounds for the endangered *dugong* (sea cow). The bay is a major source of livelihood for residents and indigenous peoples, who claim part of this body of water as their ancestral domain. Local communities in Baler confront the problems of declining fish catch brought about by stiff competition for fishery resources among local fishers, poaching by commercial fishers, rampant use of destructive fishing methods such as dynamite and cyanide.

With this backdrop the EcoGov Project came in June 2003 to help delineate the municipal waters of adjoining coastal towns of San Luis, Baler, Dipaculao and Dinalungan in the Province of Aurora. The delineation process initially got stalled due to the absence of a Baywide consensus on the coastal terminal points (CTPs) among the municipalities. Baler with Dipaculao and Dinalungan and Casiguran agreed on their CTP. Baler with San Luis and Dinalungan with Dipaculao did not immediately reach an agreement.

But through a series of consensus-building activities, the Coastal Resource Management Technical Working Groups (CRM-TWGs) of these municipalities continued to draft the Baywide plan in consultation and participated by coastal communities. The Municipal councils and their respective Mayors respectively passed resolutions endorsing and approving the plan which incorporates the principles of good governance, i.e., transparency, accountability and participatory decision-making. Three out of the 4 municipalities contributed an initial fund of P105,000 to support implementation of key activities..

The Plan has five major strategies: 1) registry of fisher folks and boats, 2) issuance of permits for fishers and fishing boats operating within municipal waters, 3) issuance of license for all types of fishing nets used within municipal waters, 4) coding system of boats to ascertain their place of origin and 5) putting a system to report illegal practices.

Initial implementation activities included formulation of respective ordinances to support plan implementation (e.g., ordinances for budget allocation, enforcement, etc.) IEC activities (barangay assemblies, printed materials and radio announcements) and training for fish wardens and fish examiners. To date, 48 fish wardens and seven fish examiners have been deputized. As a succeeding step, LGU officials and fisher folks are training their sight on the establishment of more sanctuaries and protection of existing ones to boost fish stock and eventually, increase fish catch of local fishermen in the not so distant future.

A more rigid enforcement of fishery laws resulted in the apprehension of illegal fishers in their municipal waters. Since the adoption of the inter-LGU plan, the municipalities of Dinalungan, Baler and San Luis caught a group each of illegal fishers. The enforcers confiscated their catch and prosecuted for violations of the fishery laws.